

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 remain pending. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-6, 8-11 and 14-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Kramer et al (USPN 6,725,548) in view of Huggins (USPN 6,533,291). Applicant had previously argued that independent claim 1 specifically calls for the aperture of the rotatable sleeve to be rotationally manipulatable between a position in which the aperture is aligned with the blade receiving slot for receiving a blade and a position in which the aperture is non-aligned with blade receiving slot to define a clamping configuration. In his "Response to Arguments", the Examiner had pointed out that the claim does not specify that the aperture is to engage the blade. While the device of the Kramer reference is in fact devoid of an aperture in the sleeve that is rotatable between aligned and non-aligned positions, independent claim 1 has nonetheless been amended to additionally call for engagement of the blade while in the non-aligned position. Rather than engaging the aperture, the claim has been amended to more properly call for the blade to engage the proximal end of the rotatable sleeve. It is respectfully submitted that no such structure or function is suggested by either of the cited references alone or in combination and that therefore obviousness is effectively avoided.

Independent claim 21 has similarly been amended to specify that a blade is to engage the front end portion of the rotatable sleeve when the aperture and blade receiving slot are non-aligned. It is respectfully submitted that no such structure or function is suggested by either of the cited references alone or in combination and that therefore obviousness is effectively avoided.

Claims 7, 12 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Kramer in view of Phillips et al (USPN 5,575,071). In view of the non-obviousness of the underlying independent claim 1 as was argued above, it is respectfully that all claims depending therefrom similarly avoid obviousness.

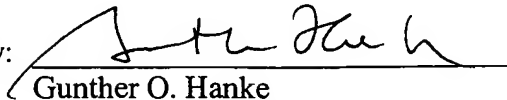
In light of the above amendments and remarks, applicant earnestly believes the application to now be in condition for allowance and respectfully requests that it be passed to issue.

If any fees are due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 21-0800.

Respectfully submitted,

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